

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for determining an optimal award schedule for satisfying a purchase requisition, the method comprising:

receiving over a computer network, from each of a plurality of candidate suppliers, a corresponding plurality of bids;

receiving, from a candidate supplier over said computer network, an explicit offer of a business-volume discount that is triggered when a purchase from the candidate supplier of at least one unit of a first qualifying item and at least one unit of a second qualifying item has an aggregated volume within a defined volume interval; and

determining by a processor an optimal award schedule comprising an optimal combination of suppliers and a list of items to be ordered from each supplier to at least partially satisfy the purchase requisition utilizing the explicit offer of a business volume discount.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving a business-volume discount offer comprises receiving a business-volume discount offer in which a business-volume discount is triggered on the basis of purchases of items belonging a first category of items and no business-volume discount is triggered on the basis of purchases of items belonging to a second category of items.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 2, wherein receiving a corresponding plurality of bids comprises receiving, from the at least one candidate supplier, a first bid in which each item recited in the first bid belongs to no more than one item-category.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 2, wherein receiving a corresponding plurality of bids comprises receiving, from the at least one candidate supplier, a first bid in which at least one item recited in the first bid belongs to both a first item-category and a second item-category.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 4, wherein determining an optimal award schedule comprises constraining the optimal award schedule such that a purchase of the at least one

qualifying item contributes to a business volume discount associated with at most one of the first and second item-categories.

Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving an offer of a business-volume discount comprises receiving a business-volume discount offer that defines a plurality of volume intervals, each of the volume intervals being associated with a corresponding discount to be offered when the volume of an aggregate purchase of at least two qualifying items from the at least one candidate supplier is within the volume interval.

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein receiving an offer of a business-volume discount comprises receiving a business-volume discount offer in which the defined volume interval has a lower bound defined by a volume threshold and no upper bound.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A computer-readable medium having encoded thereon software for satisfying a purchase requisition, the software comprising instructions for:

receiving, from each of a plurality of candidate suppliers, a corresponding plurality of bids;

receiving, from a candidate supplier, an explicit offer of a business-volume discount that is triggered when a purchase from the candidate supplier of at least one unit of a first qualifying item and at least one unit of a second qualifying item has an aggregated volume within a defined volume interval; and

determining by a processor an optimal award schedule comprising an optimal combination of suppliers and a list of items to be ordered from each supplier to at least partially satisfy the purchase requisition utilizing the explicit offer of a business volume discount.

Claim 9 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 8, wherein the instructions for receiving a business-volume discount offer comprise instructions for receiving a business-volume discount offer in which a business-volume discount is triggered on the basis of purchases of items belonging a first category of items and no business-volume discount is triggered on the basis of purchases of items belonging to a second category of items.

Claim 10 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein the instructions for receiving a corresponding plurality of bids comprise instructions for receiving, from the at least

one candidate supplier, a first bid in which each item recited in the first bid belongs to no more than one item-category.

Claim 11 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 9, wherein the instructions for receiving a corresponding plurality of bids comprise instructions for receiving, from the at least one candidate supplier, a first bid in which at least one item recited in the first bid belongs to both a first item-category and a second item-category.

Claim 12 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the instructions for determining an optimal award schedule comprise instructions for constraining the optimal award schedule such that a purchase of the at least one qualifying item contributes to a business volume discount associated with at most one of the first and second item-categories.

Claim 13 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 8, wherein the instructions for receiving an offer of a business-volume discount comprise instructions for receiving a business-volume discount offer that defines a plurality of volume intervals, each of the volume intervals being associated with a corresponding discount to be offered when the volume of an aggregate purchase of at least qualifying two items from the at least one candidate supplier is within the volume interval.

Claim 14 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 8, wherein the instructions for receiving an offer of a business-volume discount comprise instructions for receiving a business-volume discount offer in which the defined volume interval has a lower bound defined by a volume threshold and no upper bound.

Claim 15 (new): The method of claim 1 further comprising imposing, by a party other than a candidate supplier, a private buyer constraint prior to determining the optimal award schedule.

Claim 16 (new): The method of claim 15 further comprising changing an imposed private buyer constraint and redetermining the optimal award schedule using the changed private buyer constraint.

Claim 17 (new): The method of claim 1 further comprising storing a supplier profile corresponding to a candidate supplier.

Claim 18 (new): The method of claim 17 wherein determining an optimal award schedule considers a stored supplier profile corresponding to a candidate supplier.

Claim 19 (new): The computer-readable medium of claim 8 further comprising instructions for imposing, by a party other than a candidate supplier, a private buyer constraint prior to determining the optimal award schedule.

Claim 20 (new): The computer-readable medium of claim 8 further comprising instructions for storing a supplier profile corresponding to a candidate supplier.